Color Code:

Change to current policy or practice

Distance Education Plan

2015-2018

College of Sequoias

**Introduction**

The purpose of the College of the Sequoias (COS) Distance Education Plan is to provide a roadmap for the growth and sustainability of instructional and student support services through online education. This Distance Education (DE) Plan is the result of many factors. With the growth of DE across the nation and in California, there have been changes to accreditation standards related to DE, additional laws enacted, regulations developed specific to DE, and state-wide opportunities such as the OEI Course Exchange. Additionally, in response to the 2012 ACCJC Show Cause sanction, the District has been undergoing a major transformation in its governance, planning, decision-making, and resource allocation structures. As part of this major transformation, we recognize theneed to develop systematic planning, assessment and evaluation of DE courses and programs.

The focus of this plan is the continuous improvement of distance education (DE) at College of Sequoias (COS) within an environment of collegiality and with respect for Academic Freedom. We are committed to engaging in a dynamic process of planning and assessment that is informed by research and communication in order to develop outstanding distance education opportunities for all COS students.

Distance Education requires the support and involvement of Academic Services, Administrative Services and Student Services to meet the needs of our diverse student population efficiently and innovatively. This Plandescribes the commitments COS makes to ensure the quality of Distance Education, organized in five key areas: Governance Structure,Support/Access for Students, Professional Development for Faculty/Staff, Curriculum, and Technology.

This Distance Education Plan will complement the District Master Plan. At the end of each spring semester, the DECOS committee shall review the Distance Education Plan to assess progress and inform decision making.

*Distance Education Task Force Members*

*DECOS Members*

Table of Contents

1. Mission Statements
2. Organizational/Committee Structure for Distance Education Governance
3. Distance Education at COS Defined
4. Access/Support for Students
5. Professional Development for Faculty/Staff
6. Curriculum
7. Technology

**Mission Statements**

**COS District Mission Statement**

*College of the Sequoias is a comprehensive community college district focused on student learning that leads to productive work, lifelong learning and community involvement.  
  
College of the Sequoias affirms that our mission is to help our diverse student population achieve its transfer and/or occupational objectives and to advance the economic growth and global competitiveness of business and industry within our region.  
  
College of the Sequoias is committed to supporting students' mastery of basic skills and to providing access to programs and services that foster student success.*

**COS Distance Education Mission Statement**

*The mission of Distance Education at College of the Sequoias (COS) is to extend educational opportunities to a diverse population who prefer or have need of alternative methods of delivery. These approaches to instruction outside the traditional classroom setting provide greater opportunities for students to obtain the education they need to achieve their goals, while continuing with demanding personal and employment schedules.*

Distance Education programs support the District Mission Statement through expansion of access to classes. These new programs provide increased access to higher education to the residents of the District.

**Organizational/Committee Structure for Distance Education Governance**

Distance Education is currently not fully integrated into the decision making and governance structure at COS. Faculty, just as in face to face classes, are responsible for implementing academic standards and encouraging best practices, the governance of which falls under the purview of the Academic Senate. Training and professional development, particularly important for online classes, and pedagogical concerns are similarly Academic Senate issues. On the other hand, the technology, infrastructure, database and LMS maintenance, mechanisms of student verification, and similar issues are District management concerns. Currently, the only committee tasked with integrating these two spheres of influence is DECOS, a subset of Academic Senate which does not participate in Program Review and has no clear path through the governance process to request resources or to influence decisions outside its Academic Senate charter.

Complicating the matter is that academic concerns of individual online classes rightly reside in the discipline that offers them, thus the specific needs of these disciplines should be addressed by their Program Reviews and that area’s Dean. However, each of these disciplines operates online essentially in the same technological environment, over which none of the area deans has oversight, nor should it be the responsibility of any one unit in Program Review to request resouces for the whole system.

Online education has received increased attention from lawmakers, increased scrutiny from accrediting agencies, and increased opportunities for partnerships and development with California’s Online Education Initiative (OEI). It is important that District online efforts be integral to its mission and that growth should be planned and systematic.

What is needed is to situate online education at COS in our governing mechanisms to consider and prioritize the special needs of the whole online system as well as those needs of individual units and to integrate these needs into a coherent online strategy to implement the District’s overall educational goals and objectives. Distance Education should have a voice in developing Master and Strategic plans and a seat in governance outside just the Academic Senate.

The best way to envision how this integration can come about is to think of online education as a virtual campus. Hardware infrastructure, Learning Management Systems, and other software are the landscape and classrooms of online courses.

To fully integrate Distance Education into District Planning, College of the Sequoias ensures scope and representation in the following ways:

1. Distance Education at COS (DECOS), a standing committee of Academic Sentate: DECOS addresses Curriculum and Faculty and Student Support, along with other Distance Eduction issues within the pervue of Academic Sentate. The Distance Education at College of the Sequoias (DECOS) committee is responsible for requesting, reviewing, and reporting on District wide data regarding Distance Education.
2. The Distance Education Coordinator is a full-time faculty position that reports to the Vice President for Academic Services and is a member of several key College committees. The Distance Education Coordinator is vital to the success of distance education at COS.
3. Faculty Enrichment Committee (FEC), a standing committee of Academic Senate: FEC approves and comunicates available development opportunites for the District. This committee shall contain a voting member of DECOS to address Professional Development for Faculty/Staff to improve the quality of Distance Education courses for Sequoias Community College.
4. Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee (IPEC), a standing committee of District Governance Committee: IPEC makes recommendations to District Governance Senate on institutional planning and accreditation. The administrative co-chair of DECOS shall be a voting member of IPEC.
5. Technology Committee (TC), a standing committee of District Governance Senate: TC makes recommendations to District Governance Senate on policies, planning and other matters related to Technology andStudent Access. This committee shall be co-chaired by the Distance Education Coordinator and shall contain a voting member of DECOS.
6. Thinking of distance education as our virtual campus, what is needed at COS is management position, responsible for managing both the detailed needs of individual units as well as advocating for the digital campus as a whole in the larger governance structure.

See the [College of the Sequoias Governance web page](file:///C:/Users/Mary-Catherine/AppData/Local/Temp/Participatory%20Governance%20Structure) for more information.

**Distance Education at COS Defined**

While the DE Regulations released in 2008 by the Chancellor’s Office define what the criteria is for distance education, it is up to individual colleges to develop functional descriptions that inform students prior to their enrollment in distance education courses. Therefore, in the schedule of classes, it is important that online and hybrid courses are clearly defined and identified. In an effort to be clear with students, functional descriptions for consistent terminology are identified in the table below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Descriptor | COS Definition | Processing | Notes |
| Online | Courses in which students work entirely without having to come to any college facility. Arranged proctored tests are available in this modality (students do not have to come to a COS site to take tests); orientations and/or face-to-face class meetings are optional. Synchronous activities are not required but if scheduled, they may be posted as required archives for asynchronous access. | Requires separate Curriculum Committee approval with Distance Learning Addendum  (DLA) form and follows all quality measures as outlined in the Distance Education Guidelines (i.e. Regular Effective Contact) | Requires faculty readiness standards are met prior to online teaching. If proctoring is required, it cannot be required that students come to campus. Rather, instructors must arrange for a proctoring location in collaboration with the student. |
| Hybrid | Anytime distance education is offered in lieu of face-to-face class time, where planned face-to-face time is formally scheduled. This designation is also given whenever students are required to come to a COS site for any reason (testing, orientation, etc.) | Requires separate  Curriculum Committee approval with Distance Learning Addendum (DLA) form and follows all quality measures as outlined in the Distance Education Guidelines (i.e. Regular Effective Contact) | If students are required to come to a COS site for any reason, the course is declared a hybrid course to notify students of this requirement. |

*(Model: Mt. San Jacinto DE Plan, August 2011)*

**Title 5 Section 55200 Definition and Application.** Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. All distance education is subject to the general requirements of this chapter as well as the specific requirements of this article. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. §12100 et seq.) and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, (29 U.S.C. §794d). NOTE: Authority cited Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code; Title 29 United States Code Section 794d, and Title 42 United States Code Section 12100 et seq. <http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/AA/DE/de_guidelines_081408.pdf>

DE programs are intended to supplement, rather than supplant, traditional delivery of our educational programs, and divisions across campus continue to schedule online classes, including Business, Consumer Family Studies, English/Fine Arts, I&T, Math, Counseling, Fire Technology, Library, Nursing, and Social Sciences. Instructors schedule classes in three main formats: (1) entirely online; (2) online with orientation; and (3) hybrid (requiring scheduled meetings in addition to online activity). The table below indicates the number of sections offered in the Spring 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, Summer 2014, 2015, and 2016, and Fall, 2013, 2014, 2015, and those scheduled for Fall 2016.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Semester | Online Sections |
| Spring 2013 | 85 |
| Spring 2014 | 96 |
| Spring 2015 | 106 |
| Spring 2016 | 107 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Semester | Online Sections |
| Spring 2013 | 85 |
| Summer 2013 | 0 |
| Summer 2014 | 20 |
| Summer 2015 | 27 |
| Summer 2016 | 35 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Semester | Online Sections |
| Fall 2013 | 91 |
| Fall 2014 | 93 |
| Fall 2015 | 99 |
| Fall 2016 (scheduled) | 106 |

DE enrollments account for about 7% of all District FTES.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Semester | FTES |
| Spring 2012 | 303.07 |
| Fall 2012 | 329.47 |
| Fall 2013 | 324.33 |
| Spring 2013 | 313.63 |
| Spring 2014 | 324.87 |
| Summer 2014 | 83.5 |
| Fall 2014 | 301.80 |
| Spring 2015 | 116.46 |
| Fall 2015 | 345.61 |
| Spring 2016 | 330.15 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year | DE FTES | COS FTES |
| 2012-2013 | 627.4 | 8,711 |
| 2013-2014 | 615.43 | 8,984 |
| 2014-2015 | 418.26 | 9,054 |
| 2015-2016 | 675.76 | 8,898 |

2015-2016 Success Data. DE Success rates have been relatively stable since Fall 2014 with an average success rate of 62.9%, which is 6.3% lower than success rates for the same classes delivered on the ground.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Fall 2014 | Spring 2015 | Fall 2015 | Spring 2016 | Average |
| F2F Success | 68.4 | 67.2 | 68.8 | 70.4 | 69.2 |
| DE Success | 62.6 | 58.6 | 62.4 | 63.7 | 62.9 |
| Difference | 5.8 | 8.7 | 6.4 | 6.7 | 6.3 |

Out-of-state students. The District monitors the numbers of students living outside California who take online classes to comply with federal regulations concerning State Authorization for DE programs. State Authorization is required from each state where COS would be considered to be “doing business.” Our interpretation is that we would not be required to pursue State Authorization from any state at this time.

     Fall 2015

1. NJ student enrolled in MUS 001
2. UT student enrolled in HIST 025
3. FL student enrolled in ACCT 210
4. NV student enrolled in POLS 010

Spring 2016

1. TN student enrolled in BUS 082 and BUS 184
2. MO student enrolled in CFS 080, ENGL 002, and PSY 001
3. FL student enrolled in BUS 082, CHLD 039, ENGL 002, and ANTH 010 ID student enrolled in POLS 010
4. FL student enrolled in BUS 184

The District monitors the numbers of in-state students only taking online classes to support the development and maintenance of comparable online services for all students.

**History of DE at COS**

The District has responded to a need for a DE delivery option for our diverse student body. The people of Kings and Tulare counties are underserved in terms of easy access to higher education compared to most of California’s population. The District Mission includes the goal “to help our diverse student population achieve their transfer and, or occupational objectives and to advance the economic growth and global competitiveness of business and industry within our region.” As our distance education enrollment growth (from approximately 78 online/hybrid enrollments in Fall 2007 to approximately 3300 enrollments in Spring 2015) suggests, distance education provides critical access to college classes for those living in the COS district which encompasses an immense geographic range with widely scattered communities from the Giant Forest in the Sequoia National Park to Alpaugh and Sultana in the San Joaquin Valley. Many students select online classes due to challenges with reliable regional transportation, family and work obligations that make it difficult to attend classes on campus, or because they prefer the independence and self-reliance required by DE.

College of the Sequoias (COS) has offered DE classes since 1995, initiated by a handful of dedicated faculty. DE class enrollments continued to grow over the decade between 1995 and 2005 and in response to the charge of the framers of the COS Educational Master Plan (2005-2006), the college examined growth in distance education with the intention to “…increase student access as well as the ability of COS to advance the economic growth and global competitiveness of businesses within our District” (p. 50). COS identified its commitment to meeting the educational needs of our students in the Accreditation Self Study (2006) and Accreditation Midterm Report of 2009 by describing courses and programs offered at numerous sites, at different times, and using different distance education methodologies. To advance the implementation of the Master Plan and to support the needs of COS students as identified in the Accreditation Self Study and Five-Year Strategic Plan, the College created and filled a fulltime faculty position, Distance Education Coordinator (DEC), in Fall 2007. COS faculty have responded positively to the College’s commitment to distance education by increasing distance education course offerings from 27 online courses in the 2005-2006 academic year to 113 online courses in 2009-2010. Course offerings decreased between 2010 and 2013 due to budget concerns.

**Access/Support for Students**

In accordance with ACCJC Standards, College of the Sequoias is committed to providing all students with comprehensive Library Services (II.B.1) and Student Support Services (II.C.1.) regardless of location or means of delivery, including distance education. These services are described in the general catalog, the schedule of classes, and the District’s website.

The following commitments are outlined in an effort to make progress on the COS Institutional Goals and Institutional Objectives (appendix).

COS Commitments to Student Access *(District Objectives 1.1, 2.1, 2.2)*

* + 1. Provide 24/7 access to a Learning Management System (LMS)
    2. Maintain the synchronization of Banner and Learning Management System (LMS)
    3. Assist students who need help with Learning Management System (LMS)
    4. Ensure accessibility for students with disabilities
    5. Monitor Last Day of Attendance

COS Commitments to DE Student Support *(District Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2)*

Increase preparedness of students taking DE courses

1. Maintain a webpage for online students with resources and tutorials regarding DE.
2. Ensure systems are in place that make students aware they are registering for a DE course.
3. Share information regarding the time management skills, reading comprehension skills, and computer skills required to be successful in DE courses.
4. Provide counselors with the tools necessary to guide students interested in taking DE courses.
5. Prepare students for online classes, including, but not limited to an orientation and readiness survey.

2. Develop and maintain specific instructional support and counseling services DE students can access online *(District Objectives 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1)*

a. Provide access to online tutoring for multiple disciplines.

b. Evaluate and market online tutoring.

c. Create full service online counseling.

d. Create Library/Learning Resource module for LMS.

e. Ensure online access to Library collection and reference assistance.

f. Maintain a mechanism for allocation of resources to plans for DE

COS offers many programs that serve the general student body (Academic Counseling, Learning Resource Center, Financial Aid, Student Health Center, etc.), as well as specialized services designed for certain student populations (Access and Ability Center, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services/Cooperative Agencies Resource for Education, Cal WORKS). COS is committed to ensuring all students have access to the services they qualify for. During the 2016/2017 academic year, resources for students taking distance education courses will be reviewed. With input from various student services offices, a streamlined process will be identified that offers students the ability to complete the steps of matriculation in a format that supports distance education learners.

The general college orientation process includes information for students about distance education classes. However, DECOS has discovered that approximately 30% of students enrolled in online classes have enrolled because they thought online classes would be easier than face-to-face classes (Online Readiness Survey Data, Appendix G). DECOS has made an effort to support student awareness of the differences between online and face-to-face classes by sending pre-course messages to students and giving them tips on being successful in an online learning environment. Additionally, a confirmation mechanism in Banner exists that alerts students to the fact that they are registering for an online class and that online learning has some important differences about which students should be aware.

Success rates may be improved with better up-front preparation of students, along with development of course structures that communicate clear expectations for student learning and regular and effective contact initiated by instructors. With the assistance of DECOS members, a survey was developed in the spring 2013 semester designed to ascertain what behaviors, conditions, and dispositions students and faculty felt were important to being a successful online student.

**Professional Development for Faculty/Staff**

The following commitments are outlined in an effort to make progress on the COS Institutional Goals and Institutional Objectives (appendix).

COS Commitments regarding Distance Education to Professional Development *(District Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2)*

1. Maintain a standard for distance education instructors.

Maintain an online teaching certification equivalency process that involved input from DECOS.

Support the Online Teaching Certification Program (OTCP).

Ensure faculty are aware of communication standards for online teaching that support the COS Regular and Effective Contact policy and good teaching practices.

Provide faculty with formative and summative course evaluation tools.

Provide Faculty and Staff with the resources required to support our distance education students.

1. Ensure faculty and staff are aware of the support services available to DE students.
2. Encourage faculty to provide multiple methods of content delivery and student engagement
3. Provide faculty with course review support that results in quality online course offerings
4. Provide opportunities for faculty to learn about theories in order to make effective decisions about the use of online teaching methodologies that require active participation on the part of students and faculty.
5. Provide training opportunities and information to encourage faculty to incorporate a variety of student learning assessment methods.
6. Ensure that the COS policy on Academic Freedom applies to DE
7. Measure Faculty Satisfaction

**Online Teaching Certificate Program (OTCP)**

COS instituted an online teaching certification requirement for full-time and adjunct instructors in 2011. The Online Teaching Certification Program (OTCP) is based on the adopted Online Education Initiative Standards for Online Teaching. It is a 12-week comprehensive program facilitated by the Distance Education Coordinator and includes instruction in student support issues related to online learning, developing active learning structures, communication strategies, legal and ethical issues related to online teaching and learning, basic technology literacy, and using the course management system.

There is no difference between the hiring process for instructors who teach online and those who do not. However, the instructors must be qualified to teach online by meeting an online teaching certification requirement before they can teach online at COS. The Human Resources Department keeps official online teaching certification records. No faculty member may be scheduled for a DE class without proof of certification or equivalence. No faculty member will be penalized for not offering distance education courses or forced to convert courses to the online environment.

**Curriculum**

Title 5 (§55202) requires that the same standards of course quality shall be applied to distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses. DECOS recommends that DE classes reflect DE-specific standards developed by the Online Education Initiative (OEI) in 2013. The following commitments are outlined in an effort to make progress on the COS Institutional Goals and Institutional Objectives (appendix).

COS Commitments regarding Distance Education Curriculum *(District Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2)*

1. Analyze the relevance of DE programs and services. This would be done by the individual who has administrative oversight of distance education.
2. Maintain an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes through Program Review processes and learning outcomes assessment cycles.
3. Ensure that DE courses are included in the analysis of student learning in the same way that traditional classes are.
4. Compare assessment measures with comparable measures related to traditional face-to-face classes.
5. Monitor program development and assess program outcomes regularly.
6. Follow approved course outlines and Distance Learning Addendum (DLA) of record.
7. Present course objectives, learning outcomes, and requirements in each course.
8. Encourage the posting of assignments, due dates, and test dates at the beginning of course or in a way to give reasonable preparation time.
9. Describe any face-to-face testing or in person lab situations clearly in the syllabus.
10. Encourage the use a variety of teaching strategies, or methodologies, in online classes to support active engagement with content and with each other.
11. Review DLA at regular intervals.
12. Review instructional materials regularly to maintain currency and effectiveness as part of the course outline update process.
13. Encourage DE faculty to contact students at least one week before the beginning of the course to inform them about how to begin.
14. Encourage faculty to provide information to students about the types and frequency of communication, including feedback to students on assignments, notifying students about how to contact the instructor, notifying students about any unexpected instructor absence or expected delay in communications.
15. Maintain mechanisms which support communication within classes, including, but not limited to, announcements, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), discussion forums, journals, emails, early warning or alert systems, posted class schedules, due dates, feedback on assignments, course grade or progress, and reminders.

**Curriculum Committee Approval for Distance Education Courses**

All distance education courses receive separate Distance Education Coordinator and Curriculum Committee approval for distance education delivery. The Coordinator and the Curriculum Committee must approve a Distance Learning Addendum (DLA) that addresses regular and effective contact, how a class promotes the college mission, and adaptations of delivery for the online environment. Once passed by the coordinator and Curriculum Committee, all curriculum proposals require subsequent Board of Trustees approval.

Divisions continue to be responsible for the development of programs and curriculum that meet the distance education needs of students. The decision to offer courses at a distance are made at the division level including the identification of appropriate modalities of delivery and suitability for distance education courses for each individual certificate and degree. The Distance Education Coordinator is available for consultation to assist in these types of decisions. In the program review process, all divisions are required to examine success and retention data for distance education sections and compare to non-distance sections of the same course. Additionally, all divisions engage in the process of developing and assessing course outcomes to inform instructional decisions.

**Technology**

COS Commitments regarding Technology *(District Objectives 3.1, 3.2, 4.1)*

Provide 24/7 access to a support Learning Management System (LMS).

Provide 24/7 COS Network access.

Provide support to students, faculty and staff in use of LMS through Tier 1 support personnel.

Ensure students are aware of the technology requirements of DE courses.

Provide training to support faculty with technology use in the classroom and use of the course management system, or other required technologies.

Provide technology failure policies and procedures.

**Appendices**

1. ACCJC Policy on DE and CE (2012)
2. ACCJC 5.3 Evidence and DE Plan Outcomes Matrix
3. COS AP 4105
4. COS Regular and Effective Contact Policy
5. Summary: Institutional Goals 2015-2025 and Institutional Objectives 2015-2018
6. COS Distance Learning Addendum
7. OEI Standards
8. Online Readiness Survey
9. Online Success Survey